GLOBAL CLIMATE COALITION • GROWTH IN A GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT • GCC

CLIMATE WATCH

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Executive Director's Column

New Policy Brings New Concerns

By John Shlaes

From the actions of last month it is obvious that the Clinton administration is embarking on a series of new and aggressive policies related to climate change. On Earth Day, the president said, "I reaffirm my personal, and announce our nation's commitment, to reducing greenhouse gases to their 1990 levels by the year 2000." He expressed his intent to have the administration produce a "cost-effective" plan by August that "can continue the trend of reduced emissions."

On the heels of that announcement, Undersecretary of State designate Tim Wirth testified before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs on May 18 and again to the House Committee on Energy and Commerce on May 26. Former Senator Wirth indicated that the administration is "committed to seeing the [Framework] Convention promptly implemented and, if necessary, strengthened." He indicated that "joint implementation would be an important piece of the solution" and could be used "to offset domestic emissions of greenhouse gases," perhaps signaling the establishment of a new environmental currency and further international negotiations. EPA Deputy Administrator Robert Sussman and Susan Tierney, the new DOE assistant secretary for domestic and international policy, also testified. Both hearings concentrated on the methods or institutional structures the administration will use to reduce emissions.

The administration has set up a new Interagency Climate Change Mitigation Group (see chart below) with six working groups, each with designated lead federal agencies: 1) energy supply (DOE); 2) energy demand (DOE and EPA); 3) transportation (DOE, DOT and EPA); 4) methane and other gases (EPA); 5) greenhouse gas sinks (Agriculture); and 6) joint implementation (State). These groups will review underlying assumptions for the existing U.S. National Action Plan, baseline estimates and analytical instruments. Most important, the working groups will also examine "additional measures" the administration may employ both domestically and internationally to reduce greenhouse gases. The administration will select some industries to participate in the six "by-invitation-only" working groups. These groups will meet three times, with the first meetings held on June 10-11. Those not invited to participate in the working group meetings can attend special sessions for the general public.

Representative Mike Synar (D-Okla.) indicated in the May 26 hearing that he would soon introduce legislation that would establish a system of tradeable permits and offsets for greenhouse gas emissions. He and Representative Jim Cooper (D-Tenn.) made a similar proposal, which was fashioned after the Clean Air Act trading scheme, during the last session of Congress.

Commenting on the president's initiative, some environmentalists have indicated that the president will be judged on his ability to "set the United States on a course of action that would keep emissions below 1990 levels well beyond the year 2000." A group of 16 environmental groups has gone even further, calling for 21 measures the president should undertake to achieve his goal. A close examination of the environmentalists' options leads to the conclusion that they contemplate additional actions that could consist of new federal taxes, added spending or additional regulatory measures. These options include measures such as: 1) decoupling utility profits from electricity sales and including externalities in energy-planning; 2) removing subsidies for mature, conventional energy resources, such as fossil fuels and nuclear energy; 3) increasing fuel economy standards to 45 miles per gallon; and 4) extending envi-

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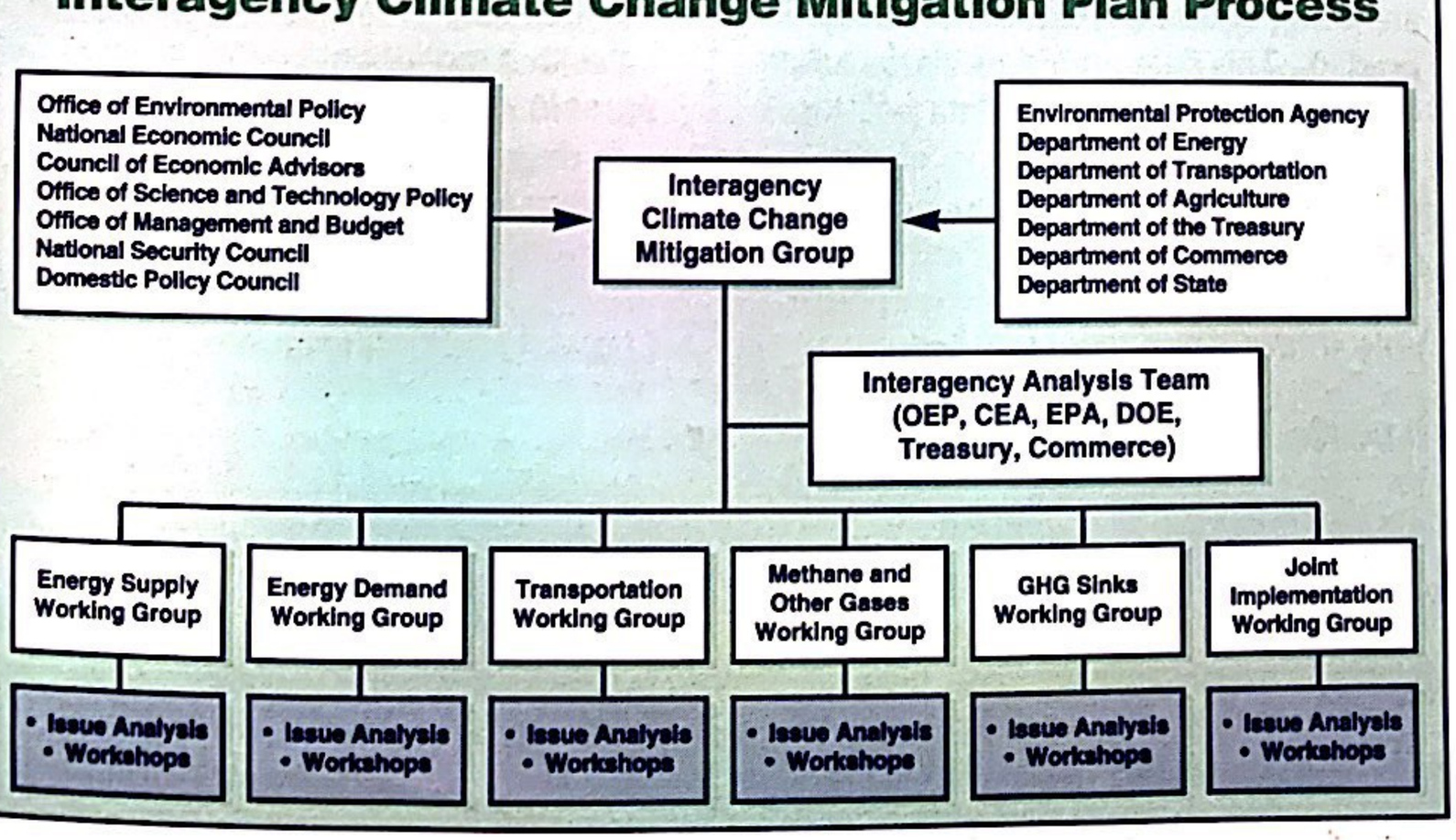
Interagency Climate Change Mitigation Plan Process



Heidelberg Appeal Quietly Gains Worldwide Support

The Heidelberg Appeal was publicly released at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. By the end of the 1992 summit, 425 scientists and other intellectual leaders had signed the appeal. Since then, word of mouth has prompted hundreds more scientists to lend their support. Today, more than 2,700 signatories, including dozens of Nobel Prize winners, from 102 countries have signed it. In spite of this spontaneous and growing support from the world's scientific community, the Heidelberg Appeal has received very little media attention.

Neither a statement of corporate interests nor a denial of environmental problems, the Heidelberg Appeal (see panel to the right) is a quiet call for reason and a recognition of scientific progress as the solution to, not the cause of, the health and environmental problems that we face. The appeal expresses a conviction that modern society is the best equipped in human history to solve the world's ills, provided that they do not sacrifice science, intellectual honesty and common sense to political opportunism and irrational fears.

The Heidelberg Appeal

We want to make our full contribution to the preservation of our common heritage, the Earth.

We are, however, worried at the dawn of the twenty-first century, at the emergence of an irrational ideology which is opposed to scientific and industrial progress and impedes economic and social development.

We contend that a Natural State, sometimes idealized by movements with a tendency to look toward the past, does not exist and has probably never existed since man's first appearance in the biosphere, insofar as humanity has always progressed by increasingly harnessing Nature to its needs and not the reverse. We fully subscribe to the objectives of a scientific ecology for a universe whose resources must be taken stock of, monitored and preserved.

But we herewith demand that this stock-taking, monitoring and preservation be founded on scientific criteria and not on irrational pre-conceptions.

We stress that many essential human activities are carried out either by manipulating hazardous substances or in their proximity, and that progress and development have always involved increasing control over hostile forces, to the benefit of mankind.

We therefore consider that scientific ecology is no more than an extension of this continual progress toward the improved life of future generations.

We intend to assert science's responsibility and duties toward society as a whole.

We do, however, forewarn the authorities in charge of our planet's destiny against decisions which are supported by pseudoscientific arguments or false and nonrelevant data.

We draw everybody's attention to the absolute necessity of helping poor countries attain a level of sustainable development which matches that of the rest of the planet, protecting them from troubles and dangers stemming from developed nations, and avoiding their entanglement in a web of unrealistic obligations which would compromise both their independence and their dignity.

The greatest evils which stalk our Earth are ignorance and oppression, and not Science, Technology and Industry whose instruments, when adequately managed, are indispensable tools of a future shaped by Humanity, by itself and for itself, overcoming major problems like overpopulation, starvation and worldwide diseases.

Atmospheric Update: Satellites Show Cooling

Much of the debate concerning climate change has been driven by the projections of computer models, or general circulation models (GCMs) as scientists refer to them. In addition to predicting future global temperatures, the models also project current temperatures. Increasingly, scientists are beginning to point out the difference between what the models say the temperature should be and what observational measurements actually indicate. A recent scientific study, published in *Science* magazine, revealed that growth rings from a 3,613-year-old alerce tree in South America show no evidence of global warming caused by human activity. Another study, published in *Nature* magazine earlier this year, indicated that Arctic temperatures are going down, not up as the models predict. This data underlies the fact that none of the observational data point to any global warming above levels consistent with the natural fluctuations in the planet's climate.

One of the most consistent and reliable sources of global temperatures is the University of Alabama, Huntsville (UAH) Earth System Science Laboratory. UAH is working with NASA's Earth Science Lab to get accurate temperature readings for almost all regions of the Earth. Microwave sounding units on the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's TIROS-N satellites gather the data, which the project scientists process monthly and place in a "public" computer file for atmospheric scientists in the United States and abroad.

Data analysis revealed in May indicates that the global composite temperature in April 1993 was four-tenths of one degree Fahrenheit lower than the 10-year average for April.

This finding is consistent with the group's April report, which projected a cooling trend in the coming months. According to the April report, March 1993 was the coldest March since satellites began measuring global temperatures in 1979. The global composite temperature was six-tenths of one degree Fahrenheit below the 10-year average for March. February 1993 also had a global composite temperature two-tenths of one degree Fahrenheit

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New Policy

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ronmental assessment requirements to cover greenhouse gas emissions. Several important questions come to mind in contemplating the administration's actions in this area (see panel on the right), especially since the current climate convention, which has been agreed to by 160 countries and ratified by the U.S. Senate, was designed to recognize the "different circumstances" among countries, and was intentionally crafted to allow flexibility among nations so that "cost-effective" and creative solutions could be found to enhance the reduction of greenhouse gases. The convention does not establish targets or timetables for emission reductions. Further, there was recognition that the United States, which invests over $100 billion a year in the environment, had made significant strides in reducing its emissions, while developing countries' emissions will grow--perhaps to 70 percent of the world's total by the year 2025.

Some Questions We All Should Be Asking the Administration on This New Program:

- Will there be an attempt to change the basic agreements in the Framework Convention? In particular, will the administration's plan reflect the flexibility provided for in the convention?
- What assumptions will be made on the cost of the measures they are considering? And what emissions reductions actually are to be achieved?
- What are the economic growth and other baseline assumptions and estimates?
- Will the process be open to and broadly representative of all affected industries, and will the measures already undertaken be considered?
- Will a "cost-effective" plan result in minimal impact on industrial growth and jobs, or will the additional measures needed to achieve emissions reduction targets become increasingly costly?
- Can a U.S. greenhouse gas trading program be created with voluntary actions, and without regulatory caps or other new regulatory schemes?
- How will the United States and other countries define the relatively new concept of "joint implementation"? Will the United States be able to take credit for emissions reductions achieved overseas? Will joint implementation provide for substantially lower U.S. control costs? Will it result in significant reductions of worldwide emissions? Are we talking about a new kind of environmental currency?
- Can business, government and environmental groups truly work together to develop effective structures that will promote technology cooperation and transfer overseas?
- What are the consequences and long-term costs of the administration's proposals for the U.S. economy after the year 2000?
- Have we carefully analyzed the circumstances of the European Community and Japan to ensure that their commitments to reducing carbon dioxide will result in actions that match corresponding U.S. measures? Have we evaluated their economic, social and political structures to ensure comparability to U.S. proposals and to ensure that there will be no adverse competitive impacts?

Quote of the Month

"Our actions alone...will not be enough to reverse the overall upward trend in atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases."

Former Senator Timothy Wirth to the House Foreign Affairs Economic Policy, Trade and Environment Subcommittee

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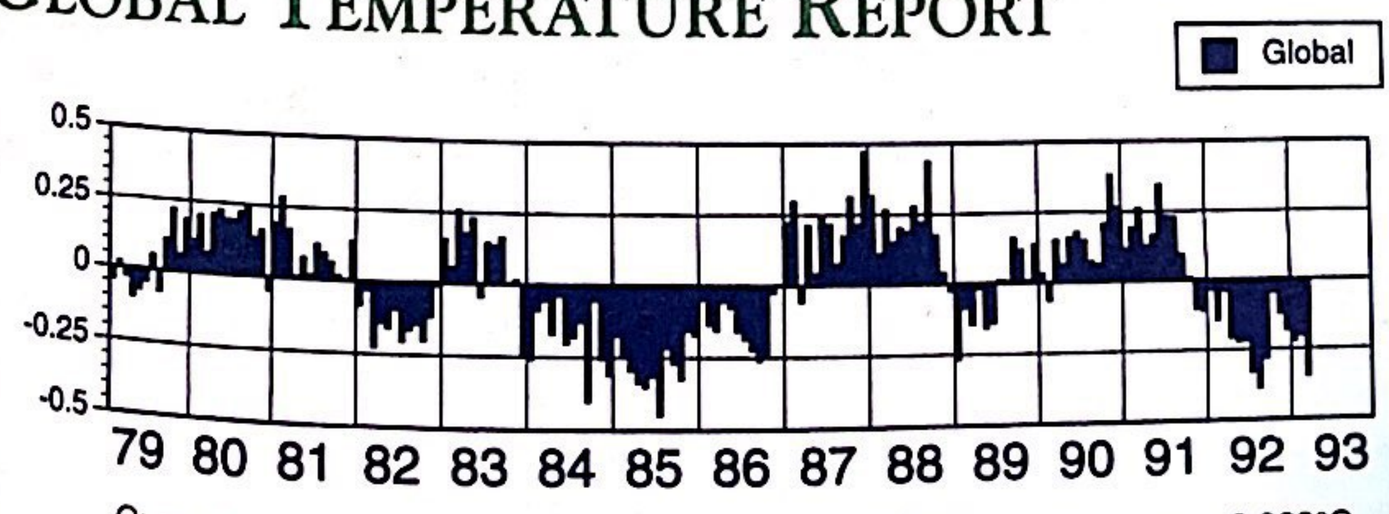
below its 10-year average.

Dr. John Christy, a UAH professor on the project, attributes this cooling trend to the effects of Mount Pinatubo's eruption in June 1991. Millions of tons of dust, ash and sulfur released by the eruption combined with water vapor to form sun-blocking droplets of sulfuric acid. These aerosols reflected solar radiation, making the stratosphere warmer but lowering temperatures on Earth.

According to Christy, Pinatubo's cooling effect might have been more severe, were it not for the El Niño, a vast pool of warm water that sometimes forms in the tropical central Pacific. Still present, this pool began forming in 1990 and peaked early last year, transferring heat to the atmosphere and mitigating the cooling trend. Pinatubo's aerosol cloud, however, is fading. Despite the low surface temperatures in April 1993, data also revealed that stratospheric temperatures were down to pre-eruption levels. But higher surface temperatures are not yet around the corner. As Christy points out, the oceans, which play a major role in determining weather patterns, "have much more thermal inertia" and "will respond much more slowly than landmasses to changes in solar radiation."

Global Temperature Report



GLOBAL TEMPERATURE VARIATION, IN CELSIUS, SINCE 1979; 10-YEAR TREND = -0.023°C

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Singer Conference Calls for Scientific Integrity

On May 24 and 25, the Science & Environmental Policy Project (SEPP) and the International Institute of George Mason University sponsored a conference entitled "Scientific Integrity in the Public Policy Process." The conference focused on the problem of scientific bias and its effect on the media, public opinion and public policy. It also examined current institutional standards and strategies for preserving scientific integrity in the legislative process.

The conference featured panel discussions with scientists and journalists, including Dr. S. Fred Singer, founder and president of SEPP; Dr. Robert Jastrow, president of the George C. Marshall Institute; Prof. Richard Lindzen of MIT; and Dr. Philip Abelson, deputy editor of *Science* magazine.

Panels discussed the problems in the use of scientific research on global warming and ozone depletion, as well as on genetically engineered products and cancer risk from toxics.

Organizers expect to publish speeches and panel presentations in an anthology of environmental readings. For more information, contact Candace Crandall at 703/527-0130.

Industry Initiatives: National Airport Electrification Project Will Have Major Effect on Air Quality

The Electric Power Research Institute and the Edison Electric Institute have announced plans to cooperate with several airport authorities across the country to study how replacing conventional fossil-fueled ground vehicles with electric counterparts can reduce air pollution and help cities improve air quality. Boston's Logan International Airport is the first to be studied. Other plans include studies of Los Angeles International and LaGuardia.

Off-road source emissions have a significant impact on air quality. Many airport vehicles spend a majority of time idling and accelerating, producing high emissions rates for short distances. Replacing ground support equipment, shuttles, personnel and burden carriers with electric models could cut some emissions by almost 100 percent. For example, replacing a diesel-driven Northwest Baggage Tractor with an electric model would reduce carbon monoxide emissions by about 98 percent, nitrous oxide by over 97 percent, and both VOC and particulates by over 99 percent. Sulfuric oxide emissions would be decreased about 66 percent and carbon dioxide emissions would fall by about 89 percent.

With more than 850 airports in the United States serviced by at least 400 cargo carriers and supported by 1,400 equipment manufacturers, the environmental impact of electric ground support systems and vehicles will be significant.

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